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ANNUAL REPORT

To May, 1872.

TO THE MEMBERS OF

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART.

The Trustees of the Association for the year ending May, 1872, respectfully submit the following report:

During the year the Museum has begun its proper work, by opening a permanent gallery of art to the citizens of New York. The important collection of pictures, the purchase of which was announced in the report of May, 1871, has been received by the Trustees, and has become the property of the Museum.

This collection comprises one hundred and seventy-five pictures, the greater number of which are by masters of the Flemish and Dutch Schools of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The history of the purchase of these pictures has been given in previous reports, and the Trustees have, in such reports, expressed their confidence in the gentlemen who acted as their professional advisers in the matter, and their belief that the collection would be found rich in choice characteristic works of the painters represented, and, as a whole, interesting and instructive. This expectation has been more than fulfilled. The two well-known and highly reputed private collections, which, when offered for sale at the breaking out of the war of 1870, were bought entire by the agents of the Museum, and which together form the bulk of the present gallery, are found to repeat one another but very little, so that there are but few masters of whose work there is more than one example. In the cases where two or more works by one painter are found in the collection, generally each is needed to a right understanding of his

work. Thus of the two pictures by Van Dyck, the "St. Martha" No. 5, admirable as it is in many respects, delicate in handling, fine in composition, and a valuable example of the great painter, would yet fail, by itself, to teach the student all that he ought to learn from Van Dyck. The portrait, No. 6, is an excellent companion to it, and gives much of those qualities of style and handling that go to make up this master's great and peculiar merit. In like manner, even the great Rubens, "The Return from Egypt," which is perhaps the gem of this collection, is supplemented and explained by the valuable specimen of the painter's earlier style, No. 4, "Lions Chasing Deer."

To be complete, as a collection of Dutch and Flemish pictures, the collection still lacks examples of several masters; as, notably, of Rembrandt. Moreover, there are certain pictures in the collection which are not wholly adequate as examples of their authors; thus, the Hobbema, No. 53, good and uninjured as it is, is too decidedly inferior in size and importance to works of the same master which decorate European public galleries, to be wholly sufficient. There are, perhaps, a half dozen of pictures which, at some future time may be sold or exchanged for other works of art, but the determination of this must be left to the future. On the other hand, there are many pictures in the collection which rank with the most celebrated and important works of their authors. There may be instanced the three admirable portraits, Nos. 138, 144 and 172, by Van der Helst, Frans Hals and Adrian de Vries, respectively; it would be hard to replace these by three pictures more characteristic of their authors and of their schools—more interesting to the student of art, or more likely to be of use to modern artists, who may wish to regain something of the mastery of expression held by their great predecessors. The pictures by Jordaens are exceedingly fine specimens of their author's work; and of equal relative value is the picture by the brothers Both, as are those by the Breughels, and those by Jan Steen and Solomon Ruysdael. A few paintings, not of the Flemish school, form a worthy nucleus of future collections. Two small but important and characteristic pictures by Cranach will help to an understanding of the

best work of the German masters. The single head by Greuze, and the picture by Pannini, and those by Guardi, are small but good commencements in their different schools.

The pictures in question constitute at present the finest part of the Museum's collection of works of art. In addition to these pictures, several works of art have been presented to the Museum, of which may be named the gift by Mr. Leon Gauchez, of Brussels, of an interesting and valuable painting by Van Ossenbeck; by Mr. Gouverneur Kemble, of a painting attributed to David Teniers, and once forming part of the Gilmor collection at Baltimore; by Mr. William B. Astor, of the marble statue of California, by Hiram Powers; by Mr. Griffith Rowe, of a bronze statue by Muller, of Munich, after the model by Schwanthaler. All these are now on exhibition at the temporary quarters of the Museum. The other works of art exhibited there are loans: of them, and of the general subject of a loan-exhibition, there will be mention in another part of this report.

The Trustees, soon after obtaining possession of the pictures purchased in Europe, ascertained that the completion of a permanent building would be delayed so long that it would be necessary to procure temporary quarters. They, accordingly, took a lease of the building No. 681 Fifth Avenue, for two years, from the 1st of May, 1872, at a yearly rental of nine thousand dollars, and after making the proper alterations, opened this to the public on the 21st day of February last. The admission to this gallery, being upon tickets gratuitously distributed by subscribers to large numbers of people, is virtually free, and the Trustees are happy to state that the public have cordially ~~availed~~ themselves of the advantages thus offered to them. The gallery is closed for cleaning on Mondays, but it is opened in the evening of that day, and during the remaining days of the week, excepting Sunday. Artists who are approved by a committee appointed for the purpose, are allowed to copy the pictures on any day except Sunday and Monday, from 9 o'clock in the morning until noon.

About five thousand five hundred persons have visited the rooms since they were opened to the public.

The building No. 681 Fifth Avenue, recommended itself partly by its location, but chiefly by its large hall, which it was evident could be made into a picture-gallery without great expense or delay. The alterations necessary to this end were carried out under the direction of the Executive Committee, and the gallery has answered its purpose as well as could be expected.

At the same time the collections of the Museum, small as they now are, more than fill this gallery, and many important works of art are arranged in the rooms of the house itself, where the light is not uniform nor always sufficient, and the free circulation of the public difficult. The large rooms in the basement beneath the picture-gallery, where important articles received as loans have been, and are now being placed and set up, are especially ill-adapted for the purpose of exhibition-rooms.

The getting together of a complete loan-exhibition of works of art of all classes, is of course wholly impracticable under these circumstances.

The Trustees are persuaded that this state of things can be bettered only by the erection of their permanent building. They believe that the building now occupied by the Museum, is as good a building as could be hired without a very heavy annual charge. It would be possible, indeed, to erect a temporary building—for instance, a light, one-story, iron construction, which would give space enough and good light and reasonable security against fire, etc.—but the cost of such an erection would have to be met by the subscription-fund of the Museum, and would seriously diminish this already too small fund, which should be kept exclusively for the purchase of works of art. The Trustees have considered many different schemes and proposals, only to return to the conviction that the permanent buildings to be erected by the city and now soon to be begun, should be looked to as the next and final habitation of the Museum, and that all should be done that can be done by the Trustees to expedite the business of building and fitting up this structure, and to make its plan and arrangements the best possible for their important purpose.

Acting upon this conviction, the Trustees have sought occasion to confer with the Commissioners of Public Parks, and have tried in every way to aid the Commissioners, and to hasten the selection of a site for the building.

Shortly after the last annual meeting, a letter was received from the Department of Public Parks, stating that the President and Treasurer thereof had been named a committee to confer with the officers of the Museum upon a site for the new building. The Executive Committee appointed a sub-committee of its own members to confer with the committee named by the said Department, and in accordance with the wishes of many members of the Museum, a petition was prepared and laid before the Commissioners of Public Parks, praying that Reservoir Square be set apart for the permanent home of the Museum. After several conferences with the committee of the Department, the sub-committee reported to the Executive Committee that the Department of Public Parks had decided to erect the Museum building in that part of the Central Park situated on the Fifth Avenue side, between Seventy-ninth and Eighty-fourth streets, and known as the Deer Park, and, by direction of the Executive Committee, a meeting of the Trustees was called, and the whole matter referred back to them.

The Trustees accepted the decision of the Park Commissioners, and directed the Executive Committee to act in concert with the Commissioners in the matter of the building. This work has not yet been begun, because of the uncertainty which has existed in all municipal affairs, but it is hoped that it is now definitely settled, and that the undertaking will be vigorously carried on during the coming summer.

The Trustees of the Museum purpose to establish an institution which, at some distant day shall combine the functions of the British National Gallery and the Art Departments of the British Museum and the South Kensington Museum. They desire, in the first place, to collect and publicly exhibit adequate examples of the ancient and modern schools of painting and sculpture, and, secondly, to provide as large and complete a collection as possible of objects which, without coming within

the class just mentioned, derive their chief value from the application of fine art to their production — in short, a representative Museum of Fine Art applied to Industry.

There are two methods of accomplishing the designs of the Trustees— one is by purchasing, and the other by borrowing. To purchase, will require large sums of money. In the chief countries of Europe it has not been difficult to obtain these sums from the government, which regards such institutions as important agents in the education of the people, and annually makes liberal grants for their support and maintenance. In this country, it will be difficult for the present to obtain sufficient contributions from public authorities, although we have strong reason to believe that such expenditures will be recognized by the tax-payers, at no very distant day, as being necessary and proper. Indeed, the Legislature of this State, by the act passed in 1871, for the benefit of the Museum, has already made a generous beginning in this direction, and appropriated both the land and the fund for the erection of the buildings of the Museum. But the money for the purchase of objects to place within the Museum must, for the present, be furnished by private subscription; and for this purpose the Trustees have made, and shall continue to make, the most earnest appeals to all those who believe that the fine arts are not only sources of the highest and most innocent enjoyment, but also agencies for increasing the commercial manufacturing wealth of the community. It is a source of great regret that they have hitherto not met with such a liberal response to these appeals as the known generosity and intelligence of this city had led them to expect. Although the gentlemen at the heads of committees have exerted themselves to obtain subscriptions, they have hitherto been insufficiently supported by the public, and of the original sum asked for, namely, two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, only about \$226,000 have been subscribed as yet.

This state of things is very disappointing; and what makes it more surprising and more sad is the fact that in a much shorter period than that during which these appeals have been pending here, \$210,000 have been raised in Philadelphia *from twenty-one persons*, and \$300,000 have been raised in Boston, in each case for a kindred purpose.

The minimum amount required by the Trustees has been stated at two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. But this sum was mentioned merely as a beginning. A very much larger sum will obviously be required to render the Museum at all worthy of its metropolitan character, and to make it a successful rival of even second-rate institutions in Europe. It is hoped, however, that it is now in a position to do its own missionary work, and to attract still larger contributions from those who have already given, and considerable sums in addition from that immense class of rich and intelligent people in this community who, so far, have given nothing.

It was stated above that another method of accomplishing the purposes of the Trustees would be by borrowing objects to place upon exhibition in the galleries from time to time. One of the most attractive features of the South Kensington Museum is the loan-collection; and undeniably something similar may be attempted here, although we have no private repositories to draw upon which can be compared in completeness and value with those of England. In some departments, particularly that of Chinese and East Indian porcelain and pottery, we might make a very interesting exhibition. But nothing of the kind can be successfully carried out until we shall be able to secure a more spacious and convenient habitation than that which we have at present.

Something has been done, however, and some works of art have been loaned to the Museum by their generous owners, and placed on exhibition in the gallery and rooms of the temporary building. The celebrated and important statue by Vela, "The Last Days of Napoleon," loaned by the President of the Museum, has attracted the attention to which its value entitles it. Place has not been found for other statues, nor any wall-room for pictures, so that no attempt has been made to form a loan-collection of such works of art. But in the other field, that of industrial or applied fine art, several very admirable objects have been loaned, of porcelain, bronze, enamel and the like, mostly from members of the Museum Association. Moreover, Mr. Brimmer, of Boston, has loaned to the Museum the

splendid cassone or painted Bridal Chest which stands at the head of the gallery, and several other persons have contributed valuable articles.

One of the most important contributions to our loan-exhibition is not yet ready for exhibition. This is the old Flemish carved oak, brought from Ghent, in Belgium, by the late Captain Alden, now belonging to Mrs. Alden, and lent by her to the Museum. This is now being arranged in the basement of the temporary building, and will be ready for exhibition in the autumn. Those members of the Board who have examined these sculptures, declare them to be of great interest, and of importance to the study of art and archæology.

As soon as there shall be room at the disposal of the Museum, the Trustees intend to bring together and organize a Loan-Collection, as varied and complete and on as large a scale as may be practicable. A standing committee of the Trustees has in charge the whole question of such an exhibition, and will be ready to take advantage of the first opportunity.

There is one part of the business of a great Museum, which has only of late been recognized as it ought to be by even the museums of Europe, namely, the publication of reproductions or copies of its own treasures of art, whether for exchange with other museums for similar publications of theirs, or for sale to the public. This is obviously an important duty, and affords a powerful means of imparting instruction.

That which the Metropolitan Museum of Art has to make public now is its paintings—paintings so valuable and so celebrated that the mere announcement of their purchase for America has caused excited comment throughout Europe.

For publishing representations of paintings, photography is available, and will become more and more so, as American photographers gain skill and acquire the ambition to do such work; and engraving on copper will always be more or less available, according as the noble art of line-engraving has followers more or less skilful. But to the Museum was offered, at the inception of its enterprise, the services of a most admirable etcher, Mr. Jules Jacquemart, of Paris, and most

fortunately it has been able to take advantage of the opportunity, and to publish etchings of some of its more important pictures. Twelve of these, forming Part I. of the *Publications of The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, have been issued, and have been heartily welcomed by the world of art-students and connoisseurs. These have been published by the Messrs. Paul and Dominic Colnaghi, of London, and have met with success. Great prominence has been given to the Museum by the publication of these remarkable etchings, and the art-journals of Europe have called attention to them, and to the importance and value of the pictures belonging to the Museum.

The Trustees conclude their Report of the first year of active work for the Museum, by urging upon all lovers of art in the State of New York their especial interest in, and public duty toward, the first attempt to found a Museum of Art, and to entreat aid and support in their undertaking now well begun.